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Uranium Resources in New Mexico

New Mexico ranks 2nd in uranium reserves in the U. S., which amounts to 15 million tons ore at 0.277% U_3O_8 (84 million lbs U_3O_8) at \$30/lb (Energy Information Administration, 2000). The most important uranium deposit in the state is sandstone within the Morrison Formation (Jurassic) in the Grants and Shiprock uranium districts, San Juan Basin. More than 340 million lbs of U_3O_8 have been produced from these uranium deposits from 1948 through 2000, accounting for 97% of the total uranium production in New Mexico and more than 30% of the total uranium production in the United States. Only one company in New Mexico, Quivira Mining Co. owned by Rio Algom Ltd. (successor to Kerr McGee Corporation), produced uranium in 1984-2000 from waters recovered from inactive underground operations at Ambrosia Lake, Grants (mine-water recovery). Hydro Resources Inc. has put its plans on hold to mine uranium by in-situ leaching at Churchrock until the uranium price increases. Reserves at Churchrock are estimated as 15 million pounds of U_3O_8 . NZU Inc. also is planning to mine at Crownpoint by in-situ leaching. Rio Grande Resources Co. is maintaining the closed facilities at the flooded Mt. Taylor underground mine, in Cibola County. In late 1997, Anaconda Uranium acquired the La Jara Mesa uranium deposit in Cibola County from Homestake Mining Co. The sandstone uranium deposit was discovered in the late 1980s in the Morrison Formation and contains approximately 8 million pounds of 0.25% U_3O_8 . Future development of these reserves and resources will depend upon an increase in price for uranium and the lowering of production costs, perhaps by in-situ leaching techniques.